

ABSTRACT

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THE IMPACT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG AFRICAN AMERICANS

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The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of domestic violence on marital satisfaction. The sample for this study consisted of forty female respondents from one women's shelter in Atlanta, Georgia.

One questionnaire consisting of eighteen items was administered by the researcher and one assistant. The variables tested in the domestic violence section were hitting, kicking, shoving, and slapping. Marital satisfaction was measured by the respondents assessment of the couples cohesiveness, agreement on issues, sexual relationship, and love and affection displayed. The results were analyzed utilizing frequency distribution, means, standard deviation, chi-square and GAMMA.

The findings indicate a statistical significance between domestic violence and marital satisfaction existed, with a meaningful relationship between the variables. Thus the null hypothesis was rejected.

THE IMPACT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON MARITAL
SATISFACTION AMONG AFRICAN AMERICANS

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I would like to thank God, who has brought me a long way and delivered me from many hardships. I would also like to thank my thesis advisor Dr. Gale Horton who always believed in me. Most importantly, my family, Maxton and Miles Allen, without whom my life would have little meaning.

Dedicated in loving memory to: Vera Edna Rogers.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Surgeon General and the Department of Health and Human Services report that: “Domestic violence and other forms of violence represent an enormous burden for women throughout the world. In most countries, between 25% and 50% of women admit being or having been the object of physical violence and sexual abuse from their partners” (U.S. Surgeon General and (HHS), on Domestic Violence, 1997; p. 27). It is within their homes that women are the most exposed to violence.

In 1997, Health and Human Services reported that 5,745 women in the United States were homicide victims. Six of every 10 of those victims were killed by someone they knew; about half were murdered by their spouse or someone with whom they had been intimate (U.S. Department of Justice, 1992, p. 31). An estimated 47 percent of murdered Black women are killed by acquaintances and 43 percent by “family members,” (International Journal of Health Services, p. 85).

Domestic violence is a frequent reason for divorce today. The U.S. Surgeon General and the Department of Health and Human Services report that domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to American women between the ages of 15 to 44 and contribute to more than 1/3 of the divorce rate (U.S. Surgeon General and (HHS), on Domestic Violence, p. 24). Undeniably, divorce rates are on the rise in the United States. In 1997 there were 145,900 separations in Georgia for that year (U.S. Bureau of the

Census, (1997 Census of Population). It is estimated that “six out of ten marriages end in separation or divorce” (Wineberg, 1994).

“It is estimated that half of the recent first marriages are failing at a rate of over one million each year.” (Wineberg, 1994). Also, it is estimated that half of the recent first marriages are expected to end in divorce. (Wineberg, 1994). This census further reports that: “approximately five million couples which represents 10% of currently married couples in the United States have experienced a separation and reconciliation in their marriage” (U.S. Surgeon General, 1997, p. 27).

For many women the decision to leave an abusive marriage hinges on whether they are financially able to support themselves and on how their children will ultimately be effected. When marriages fail, a person’s support system is disrupted in three ways, materially, financially, and emotionally. Not only does a person stand to lose their spouse but they also stand to lose their friends, church, as well as the community in which they live. With marriages being so unstable, there is a sense of “permanent availability,” meaning a person is not reconciled to the idea that the marriage is for a life-time, “married persons remain tentatively on the marriage market, susceptible to being lured out of their present marriages by opportunities for more favorable ones” (Noval, 1991). It seems that although traditional vows are being used (till death do us part or as long as we both shall live) that the real message is as long as we both shall love. Based on divorce statistics it is obvious that marriage permanence is becoming less fashionable.

A primary factor that contributes to divorce is a person's tendency to compare the marriage or spouse with others real or imagined" (Glenn, 1993). Likewise, people tend to think the grass is greener on the other side of marriage and those not married tend to think the grass is green on the marriage side. The problem being that divorce is so easily accessible that people who marry may think that marriage is doomed or at least that is what statistics demonstrate.

Intimacy, sex, and communication are aspects of marital satisfaction. Some scholars and public opinion have defined intimacy as emotional warmth, expressiveness, vulnerability, and sensitivity – all ideal qualities of women, not men. Most qualities of intimacy that accompany our notions about men are sex and providing material things. Men, more than women, base their feelings of closeness on and express their love through sex, shared activities, practical help, economic support, or just being in the other's presence, (Cancian, & Rubin, 1986;1989). Wills, Weiss, and Patterson (1988) found that husbands tend to be pleased by wives' instrumental care and help (e.g., meal preparation), and wives tend to be pleased by affectionate acts (e.g., saying, "I love you").

Statement of the Problem

Domestic violence and other forms of violence represent an enormous burden for women throughout the world. Over the centuries men had the right to dominate and rule over their wives. Early Roman law gave men *absolute* power over their wives but, whether this power included the right to put their wives to death was not mentioned

(Stedman, 1917). There was no question that husbands could control their wives with physical force. Church doctrine affirmed men's right to control women:

“wives, be subjects to your husbands
as to the lord....As the Church is subject
to Christ, so let wives also be subject in
everything to their husbands.” Wrote St. Paul
(Ephesians 5:22-24).

In the United States, in 1864, a North Carolina court ruled that the state should not interfere with domestic ‘chastisement,’ unless “some permanent injury was inflicted or there was an excessive of violence.” Otherwise, the law “would not invade the domestic forum or go behind the curtain,” preferring instead to “leave the parties to themselves, as the best mode of inducing them to make the matter up and live together as man and wife should” (Eisenberg, & Micklow, 1997).

Until recently, the criminal justice system treated domestic violence as a private matter between husband and wife. But, after significant lobbying by feminist and women's groups the legal system began to change. Domestic violence is now defined as a crime against both the victim and the state. The state now has the right to arrest and prosecute batterers.

With domestic violence being a mitigating factor in the divorce rate, searching for ways to keep marriages intact is important. Therapeutic intervention is one way to uncover issues that plague individuals and families. With the African American family, social workers must be conscientious of the unique circumstances that African Americans bring to therapy, and apply treatment modalities that apply to their specific needs. For example, therapeutic practices which are successful with middle-class white families

must be carefully examined as to their applicability with middle-class Black individuals. Such awareness is necessary for defining appropriate intervention strategies when working with the African American population.

Another concern about failed marriages are the children. They are the ones who pay the biggest price for divorce. Children from divorced families are usually shifted from parent to parent. They have little stability in their lives. Raising children with the idea that if a marriage doesn't work, one can simply get a divorce, only perpetuates the cycle of divorce.

On the other hand, research shows that if couples seek the help of a professional therapist or marriage counselor in their time of need, it does have an impact on marital satisfaction and honoring a life long-commitment.

Significance and Purpose of the Study

In this study, the researcher hopes to find a relationship between domestic violence and a person's level of marital satisfaction. Perhaps through this research, knowledge will be gained of how a couple may realize a deeper commitment and happiness within their marriage. Studying the impact of domestic violence is important because, attempting to maintain a marriage is less likely to be successful when one person is a batterer. As social workers, we should begin to search for ways to provide assistance to families involved in domestic violence. Family's should provide a source of acceptance and nurturing to both adults and children. As social workers we assess a

child's ecological system and the family's is the biggest contributor during the adolescent years of a child's development.

With the other focus of my research targeting domestic violence and the African American family, social workers might benefit from keeping in mind the unique cultural background and history that black people bring to the therapeutic relationship. Black people have a strong sense of survival considering the countless years of demoralizing and debilitating discrimination. It is that reality of discrimination that exists at the root of many issues black people face. The subsequent manifestation varies person to person with some being the perpetrator of domestic violence.

Marital satisfaction influences more than the parent's relationship. It affects the entire family. If domestic violence is an area that tears at the foundation of marital satisfaction, it is important that it be researched. The literature indicates there is a negative relationship between domestic violence, marriage stability and life satisfaction (Cancian & Rubin 1986, 1989). Domestic violence appears to have a crippling effect within the family, not only does it effect a persons self-esteem and self-worth, but it appears to stifle social interaction, and increases fear within the victim. The only hope of reconciling the family would be through family counseling.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Statistics show a woman in the United States is beaten by her husband or boyfriend every nine seconds (Gelles, 1998). In 1998, more than 175,000 days were lost from paid work as a result of domestic assaults (Gelles, 1998). The total health-care costs of family violence are estimated at more than \$44 million each year. (Gelles, 1998).

Abusive husbands and lovers harass 74% of employed battered women at work, either in person or over the telephone causing 56% of them to be late for work at least five times a month, 28% to leave early at least five days a month, and 56% to miss at least three full days of work a month. (New York Victim Service Agency Report on the Costs of Domestic Violence, 1998, p. 59).

The United Health Care Corporation's OPTUM, cites that husbands and boyfriends commit 13,000 acts of violence against women in the workplace every year.

The Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence states that forty-two percent of murdered women are killed by their male partner. The National Safe Workplace Institute's national survey indicates that 94% of corporate security directors rank domestic violence as a high security problem at their company. Twenty-five percent of all couples in ongoing relationships experience repetitive abuse, (Miller, 1987).

Domestic Violence

Like the rest of the country, African American women have looked the other way when confronted with violence in the home. For so many, it is a question of pride and privacy. After all, “what happens between a man and woman is their business,” and when there’s trouble, often the impulse is not to reach out for help, but to turn inward. That type of pride “causes a lot of women to suffer in silence,” says Rosie Alexander, (1998) Outreach Coordinator at My Sister’s Place, a Detroit shelter for battered women and children. Domestic violence crosses racial barriers affecting every woman living it. Most women have the tendency to blame themselves somehow for being victimized. The impact of domestic violence has a tremendous effect on the marriage relationship. The self-esteem of a woman suffers, along with intimacy, sex, and communication between spouses.

Data from other studies indicate that many separating and divorced women experience violence in their marriages. In a study of 362 separating husbands and wives, (Ellis & Stuckless 1993) reported that more than 40% of separating wives and 17% of separating husbands stated that they were injured by their partners at some time during the relationship. Studies by Fields (1992), Parker and Schumacher (1993) found between 50% and 70% of divorcing wives reported being assaulted by their husbands at least once during their marriage. According to Schulman (1993), two thirds of divorced women in a Harris poll reported violence in their former relationships. Ellis and Stuckless (1993) stated that during periods when partners become aware of the probability of separation

especially the last six months, 57% of wives and 37% of husbands claimed they had been physically and emotional or verbally hurt by their partners.

In one Philadelphia study (Ellis & Dekeseredy, 1994). It was reported that women not only experienced violence in their marriages, but that violence was a factor in leaving their relationships. Of the women who experienced violence, 19% said they left the marriage because of the violence. Other women reported that their husbands were violent at least three times during the marriage. In their personal accounts, women cited two factors that caused them to leave their marriages. First, they stated they left after a serious incident of violence; second, they said they left when they believed that seeing the violence was harming their children's emotional well-being. Others reported not leaving sooner because they had no place to go.

Many women report that fear is a factor in separating and divorce. Johnson and Sacco (1995), report that for some women, leaving a violent relationship does not end the violence. Some men continue to be violent toward their former partners. This has led some women to be fearful during the period after they were separated from their ex-husbands. "Not only are women at greater risk of injury during the separation, but they are also at greater risk of death." (Wilson & Daly, 1993).

Another study (Wilson & Daly, (1993), reports that women's experiences of violence during separation affect their ability to negotiate for marital assets. Child support is critical for women if they hope to obtain an adequate standard of living. Many women have low incomes from their jobs, and many mothers cannot work full-time. Thirty-nine percent of divorced women with children (18 and under) live below the

official poverty level (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996). Those who do receive child support have a better chance of living above the poverty line (Nicholas & Caseboldt, 1992).

According to a U.S. General Accounting Office report (1994), noncustodial parents, usually fathers, owe \$34 million in child support to mothers. The principal reason is that enforcement of child support has been weak.

The experience of violence can have repercussions for women throughout the divorce process. Women are fearful during negotiations for custody and property, as well as during negotiations for child support. Some of the women were also fearful during negotiations for visitation. However, studies show a substantial group of women negotiate for resources in a “climate of fear” in which their fear of violence can lead them to forfeit their rights.

As social workers, we must expand our thinking about this climate of fear. For example, some scholars believe men engage in a practice called “custody blackmail” (Neely, Polikoff, 1994). This term is used to describe a father’s threat to sue for custody, even when he does not want it, to force the mother to bargain away her rights to spousal and child support. There appears to be a relationship between fear of losing custody and nonreceipt of child support. This suggests that because some women feared that they could lose custody during negotiations for child support, they reduced their demands for resources. However, it is important to remember that the fear of losing custody is also related to the experience of violence during marriage. Thus, some women who traded child support for custody could also have been motivated by fear of violence at the hands

of their former partners. Their fear of violence could also have contributed to, or increased, their fear that their ex-husbands would try to get custody of their children. The experiences of these women suggests the need to expand our thinking beyond custody blackmail to include not just what women specifically trade custody for, but also the climate of fear within which some women negotiate. It is these fears, which are related to their experiences of violence, that can lead some women to drop or reduce their demands for child support.

Other evidence shows a general pattern of male control during separation and after divorce, which may contribute to a general climate of fear for women. (Arendell 1995) stressed that fathers in her study used threats to obtain custody as a way to control their wives. She found that more than three fourths of the 75 fathers in her study threatened a custody challenge after the divorce, with nearly a third issuing a formal threat through an attorney. According to Arendell, fathers undertook these custody challenges to harass their former wives, in particular to balance out the power of their former wives by prohibiting maternal custody, which symbolized to the men their losses and the disproportionate authority of their former wives at divorce. Fighting for custody was often not the end of conflict; the same women who faced harassment during the negotiations for custody also experienced harassment during visitation.

Wallerstein, & Kelly (1990) argued that men who are separated tend to be highly dependent. These men, whom they describe as “embittered chaotic,” use threats and violence against their separated wives to try to bring about a reconciliation (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1990). (Ellis & DeKeseredy 1994) focused on the link between dependency,

separation, and postseparation woman abuse. They maintain that highly dependent, jealous married men tend to be involved in less stable marriages, are very threatened when their wives or partners threaten to leave them, and are most likely to abuse them at that time. (Maloney 1991) used the term “separation assault” to describe what she sees as men’s use of violence to prevent their partners from leaving the relationship and to continue to control them after they leave.

Other researchers believe similar factors are involved when men kill their partners after a separation. Barnard, Vera, Vera, and Newman (1992), based on findings from their small sample, found that the reason most often given by men for killing their wives was their “inability to accept what they perceived to be a rejection of them or their role of dominance over their former wives.” More than half of these women were living separately from their former partner at the time they were killed. A walkout or a threat of separation was especially provoking and was “taken by the men to represent intolerable desertion, rejection, or abandonment” (Barnard 1993). By killing their women partners, men in this group believed that they were avenging women’s wrongful leaving of them.

These data on male attempts to control women during separation are consistent with those that the women reported during their marriage. The women in this sample who experienced violence during their marriage stated that their husbands used violence for purposes of control. The most common reason that women gave for the violence was that it occurred when they attempted to act independently—for example, when they would assert their own point of view, when they decided to go back to work, or when they wanted to go to school. Their accounts are consistent with those of women in other

studies. A variety of researchers agree on the primary cause of violence toward wives-husbands' attempts to control their wives (Dobash, & Yllo 1993).

According to the Washington, D.C. based Center for Child Protection & Family Support Inc., 3.3 million children a year witness domestic violence. By watching and experiencing violence at home is often how children learn to resolve conflict. It stands to reason how they in turn grow-up to be perpetrators of domestic violence.

Marriage

Some research shows that a marriage has a positive effect on a person's health and life span (Ell & Northern 1990). A study was conducted by (Umberson 1991), which suggested that "family roles may promote social control of health behaviors which in turn affect subsequent member mortality" and health. Along the same lines, (Durkheim 1995) found that "individuals who were married had a lower rate of suicide." He believed that religion and marriage worked independently to reduce a person's self-destructive tendency. Likewise, other studies show a positive impact on an individual's quality of life and the choices they make when they are in a satisfying marriage. Other research also found that there is a great deal of support for the idea that married people are healthier and live longer lives (Flowers 1991).

Emotional Intimacy

Emotional intimacy is sharing one another's innermost life; expressing and listening to each other's feelings, thoughts, desires, doubts, joys, and fears; attending to, understanding, and accepting one another's "true" self. (Brown & Gary 1992) reported

that only about one-third of married, black women would go to their husbands first for support if they had “a serious problem, such as being depressed, nervous or anxious.”

Only a third of Black women named their husbands as one of the three people closest to them. More men than women consider their spouses as best friends (Rubin 1991).

Among older married persons; men are more likely than women to name their spouses as confidant, and women perceive less emotional support in marriage than men Depner, Ingersoll-Dayton, and Lee (1990), (1991). Although (Lee 1990) found that personal and marital well-being among older persons is connected to confiding in one's spouse, only 39% of men and 28% of women confide in their partners. (Williams 1991) found that emotional sustenance in marriage is related to enhanced well-being for both women and men but is especially important for women. Although they tend to receive less emotional sustenance from marriage than men, women's well-being seems to be tied more to the emotional makeup of marriage.

Sexual Intimacy

Unfortunately, few studies focus on commonplace, marital sex, although there are some exceptions (Greenblat & Huston 1990). Studies of sex in marriage tend to focus on sex as dispassionate and solely genital rather than as part of intimacy (Schneider & Gould, 1990).

Women and men tend to find sexual pleasure in different ways. (Schneider & Gould 1990) reported that women often get more pleasure kissing, holding, and touching than from intercourse. (Rubin 1991) found that working-class wives typically have more

trouble than their husbands engaging in alternate forms of sexual interaction, and middle class wives are often distressed when they do not enjoy these other forms of sex. Giving and receiving oral sex tends to be connected with husbands' sexual happiness but not with wives'; wives often are more embarrassed and inhibited about oral sex than husbands (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1991). (Szinovacz 1990) concluded that, when married couples disagree on sex, men's wishes and desires are more likely to prevail.

Communication

Many of the qualities that women display in marital conversation and conflict are traceable to their subordinate position. Subordinates must be more sensitive and responsive to those in power than the reverse (Glenn 1990). (Fishman 1992) reported that the speech patterns of women in everyday conversation are more tentative than those of their partners. Raush and his colleagues (1991) suggested that women expect noncompliance during conflict and, similar to other subordinates, resort to moral persuasion, emotional appeals, and harassment through coercion. Others suggest that husbands can afford to be more calm, conciliatory, and chivalrous because of their greater power in marriage. Still other research on marital couples demonstrated that partners in the weaker position (usually wives) tend to use more supplication or manipulation, and partners in the stronger position (usually husbands) tend to interrupt more successfully and use more bullying authority. Howard, Blumstein, and Schwartz, 1991, Kollock, Blumstein, and Schwartz, (1991). Wives, then, usually have more responsibility than their husbands for monitoring the relationship, confronting disagreeable issues, setting the tone of the conversation, and moving toward resolution

when conflict is high. However when physical battering results, communication becomes secondary to fear.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used for this study will be the Learning Theory. Social learning theorists stress the opportunities people have to model and be reinforced for abusive behavior (Gelles & Cornell, 1992). Cognitive-behavioral theorists emphasize how beliefs that support abusive behaviors are internalized. Boys may learn abusive behaviors from their male role models (fathers as well as media stars) while internalizing the belief that they should be in authority (Gelles & Cornell 1992). Girls learn to be passive from their role models while internalizing the belief that they are powerless (Gelles & Cornell 1992). These behaviors and beliefs follow them into adulthood and determine adult actions.

Reinforcement and punishment, key learning theory concepts, are also used to explain how a cycle of violence develops between an individual man and his partner (Gelles, Cornell, and Strawss, 1992):

For example:

John grew up seeing his father hit his mother and his mother give in to his father. When he married, he promised himself he would be different. Yet one day he found himself repeating his father's behavior. He had a difficult week at work and stopped at a bar for a few drinks. By the

time he got home, Pat was furious and had thrown out his dinner. He screamed at her to fix his dinner and, when she refused, he smacked her. She was so shocked and frightened that she immediately complied. Stunned by his own behavior, he apologized, promising never to hit her again.

With little awareness, John and Pat had taken the first steps toward domestic violence. By giving John what he wanted, Pat rewarded his abusive behavior. John, may conclude that the next time he's abusive with Pat, she will again respond passively. The social learning theory is used to explain couples violent relationships. The abuse is considered to be an out-growth of learned patterns of aggressive communication.

Physical abuse by men is shown to be sparked by escalating verbal and physical aggression between partners. It is obvious that stress in the family is unpreventable but the learned response to the stress constitutes the problem (Strawss, Cole, and Gelles 1992).

When confronted with issues of domestic violence some agencies use a systemic approach, which is a multidimensional model including the individual, family and society. From this perspective some professionals suggest that the victim is co-responsible for the attack. (Just as in the case of John and Pat). However, this perspective does not remove an individual from responsibility for their own behavior. What it does is to provide new and important insights into how to deal with the problem.

This framework allows for consideration of the role that society plays in contributing to the abuse.

This approach emphasizes that “violence is different from anger, misunderstanding, and frustration which are part of the human condition” (Strawss, Cole and Gelles (1992). The seriousness of violence is not minimized, but, during counseling, couples are given credit for appreciating that anger and frustration without violence is part of daily living in a family. Literature findings suggest that no one approach is more effective than the other. However, counseling for batterers is a growing field and more time needs to be devoted to testing the effectiveness of these services.

Statement of the Hypothesis

Does the level of domestic violence affect marital satisfaction?

H1: Domestic violence has a statistically significant impact on marital satisfaction.

Variables

For the purpose of this study, domestic violence is the independent variable. The dependent variable is marital satisfaction.

Terms and Definitions

Divorce - The dissolving of a marriage by law.

Domestic Violence - Any form of violence within a family (e.g., verbal abuse or physical abuse). (Encyclopedia of Social Work, Eighteenth Edition 1987).

Family - The most instinctive, fundamental social or mating group in man and animal, especially the union of man and woman through marriage and their offspring; parents and their children.

Marriage - The legal union of a man and woman as husband and wife. The act of marrying or the ceremony of being married; a wedding.

Marital Satisfaction - The pleasure derived from the gratification of the marital relationship.

Satisfaction - The fulfillment or gratification of a desire, need or appetite. Pleasure derived from the gratification of a desire or appetite.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This study was undertaken to determine if a relationship exists between the occurrence of domestic violence and the level of felt marital satisfaction among battered women. This study is predicated upon the assumption that married women that experience domestic violence would be unhappier and less satisfied with the quality of their marital relationship.

This study sought to answer three questions. First, what are the demographics of the battered woman? Second, what is the nature and extent of the domestic violence; and third, what are the respondents level of satisfaction with the marital relationship? In the questionnaire the participants were asked to indicate how long they had been married. The design of this study was an exploratory-descriptive design due to the fact that a careful literary search and numerous computer searches did not discover any prior literature, instruments, or measures that would adequately address the issues or hypotheses of this study.

Sample

The sample for this study was selected by a non-probability sampling frame, through purposive sampling, by the author's inclusion of respondents that matched the characteristics required by the issues and hypotheses of the study. For the purpose of this

study, a non-probability sampling frame was appropriate. The sample consists of 40 respondents. Using purposive sampling, which utilizes the judgement of the researcher to select the respondents in the sample the author of the study selected 40 married women to participate in the study. Based on the controversial nature of one of the variables under examination; domestic violence the entire population having this characteristic is unknown and inaccessible to the author of this study.

For the purpose of this study, three criteria were established for inclusion of the respondents into the sample. First, they “had to be female”. Second, they had to be legally married. Third, they had to have experienced domestic violence in the marital relationship. The sample was obtained by the author and an assistant visiting a battered woman’s shelter located in Atlanta, Georgia, and after determining that the respondent was married, by handing the questionnaire to the respondent to be self-administered. The time frame for the study sample was September 23, 1998 to September 24, 1998.

Description of Instruments

The study was conducted by the use of one instrument. The instrument was a questionnaire designed to be self-administered, and intended to be answered by the respondents in a one-shot episode. The questionnaire used in this study was created in 1995, by Booth, Johnson, Branaman, and Sica. It is divided into three sections: 1) demographic information consisting of four questions; 2) domestic violence information consisting of six questions; and 3) marital satisfaction information consisting of eight questions. The four demographic questions on the questionnaire concern length of marriage, age, education, and gender. The domestic violence questions concern when the

violence occurred, how often, and the effect it had on their daily life. The marital satisfaction questions concern the level of understanding, love, affection, and support received from their marital partner. According to the authors of the questionnaire, the reliability of the instrument has been rated at .86 for the marital satisfaction scale and .84 for the domestic violence scale (Chronbach's Alpha).

Data Analysis

The information obtained from the questionnaires was entered into a computer program, Statistical Package for The Social Sciences (SPSS). The data were analyzed by use of descriptive statistics, mean, median and mode. The nonprobability test of Chi Square was utilized to determine if there is in fact a relationship between the variables (domestic violence, and marital satisfaction). GAMMA was utilized to test the strength of the relationship between the variables.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

This chapter will summarize the data collected from the participants of the study. Table 1, represents frequencies and percentages of the data from the domestic violence scale. Table 2, represents the frequencies and percentages of the data from the marital satisfaction scale. Table 3, represents the Chi-Square and GAMMA analysis of the data. The confidence interval was set at $p=.05$ to determine whether to accept or reject the study hypothesis.

There were a total of forty respondents in this study. All participants were married. The majority were married less than ten years, followed by those married eleven to twenty years, and those married twenty-one to thirty years. Only ten percent of the respondents had been married more than thirty years. Concerning their level of education, the majority of the respondents had a college degree, followed by a high school education (See Table 1).

Concerning domestic violence, all the respondents were verbally abused as well as physically battered. The violence occurred most often on a monthly basis, and the respondents sought help in a battered woman's shelter less than once a month. The respondents reported that the fear of violence permeated their lives (See Table 1).

Concerning the respondents level of marital satisfaction, they reported being unhappy with the amount of understanding, love and affection that they receive from

their spouse. The respondents also reported being unhappy with the sexual relationship, their spouse's faithfulness, or their spouse as someone that takes care of things around the house. The respondents further reported being unhappy overall with the marriage (See Table 3).

TABLE 1: Demographics, Frequency Distribution

(N=40)

	<u>N</u>
1. How long have you been married?	
<u>50.0%</u> 0-10 years.	20
<u>22.5%</u> 11-20 years.	10
<u>17.5%</u> 21-30 years.	7
<u>10.0%</u> Over 31 years.	3
2. What is your age?	<u>N</u>
<u>20.0%</u> 20-30 years old.	9
<u>35.0%</u> 31-40 years old.	18
<u>17.5%</u> 41-50 years old.	6
<u>00.0%</u> Less than 20.	0
<u>27.5%</u> Over 51.	4
3. What is the highest grade you completed in school?	<u>N</u>
<u>17.5%</u> High School.	10
<u>12.5%</u> Associates Degree.	8
<u>42.5%</u> Bachelors Degree.	18
<u>00.0%</u> Masters Degree	0
<u>00.0%</u> Ph.D.	0
<u>10.0%</u> Other.	4

TABLE 2: FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
(N=40)

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Verbal insults		
Daily	4	10.00
Weekly	20	50.00
Monthly	8	20.00
Less than monthly	7	17.50
Never	1	2.50
Engage in hitting	26	65.00
Daily	11	27.50
Weekly	2	5.00
Less than monthly	1	2.50
Never		
Shouting		
Daily	1	2.50
Weekly	36	90.00
Less than monthly	3	7.50
Engage in kicking		
Daily	2	5.00
Weekly	12	30.00
Monthly	6	15.00
Less than monthly	17	42.50
Never	3	7.50
Violence influencing their daily life		
Very much	19	47.50
Quite a bit	17	42.50
Some	4	10.00

TABLE 3: FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF MARITAL SATISFACTION
(N=40)

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Amount of understanding from spouse		
Very happy	17	42.50
Pretty happy	23	57.50
Love and affection received		
Very happy	22	55.00
Pretty happy	16	40.00
Not too happy	2	5.00
Extent to which spouses agree about things		
Very happy	20	50.00
Pretty happy	19	47.50
Not so happy	1	2.50
Sexual relationship		
Very happy	16	40.00
Pretty happy	20	50.00
Not so happy	4	10.00
Spouse taking care of things around house		
Very happy	20	50.00
Pretty happy	18	45.00
Not so happy	2	5.00
Spouse as someone to do things with		
Very happy	31	77.50
Pretty happy	9	22.50
Spouse's faithfulness		
Very happy	32	80.00
Pretty happy	8	20.00
Evaluation of marriage overall		
Very happy	28	70.00
Pretty happy	12	30.00

Bivariate Correlations of the Study's Variables

Hypothesis I stated that domestic violence would have a statistically significant relationship to marital satisfaction. The Chi-Square analysis of this relationship between domestic violence and marital revealed a statistical significance existed between the variables. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

TABLE 4: BIVARIATE CORRELATIONS OF STUDY VARIABLES
(N=40)

Dependent Variable Marital Satisfaction	DF	Chi-Square	Gamma
How often does your spouse shout at you?	36	44.77*	-.1586
How often in the last few months did your spouse hit you?	27	38.30*	-.0447
During the past 6 months, how often did you leave and return?	18	17.72*	.2030
How often did you go to a shelter?	36	36.24*	-.1324
In general how much does the fear of violence influence your daily life?	18	25.20*	.1019

(p=.05)

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In summation, it was found that there is a statistically significant relationship between domestic violence and marital satisfaction. However, as the level of domestic violence increased the level of marital satisfaction decreased, showing there is a negative relationship between the two variables. The sample size being only forty could have affected the statistical significance. With the variables having a negative relationship, perhaps the outcome would have been different with a larger sample size.

All of the women in the study experienced the pain of violence in their marriages at least two times and 32% of the women stated that violence was the primary reason that they left their marriages. Unlike today, many people are choosing to divorce because of irreconcilable differences: personal incompatibility, or a failure to make marital commitments. Rather, these facts speak to the necessity for women to leave destructive marriages to protect themselves and their children which is similar to the findings indicated in the review of the literature.

The women in this study who experienced violence within their marriage felt that their husbands used violence for purposes of control. That caused many of the women respondents to feel a lack of intimacy and warmth between themselves and their husbands which supports the conclusions found in this research of intimacy. Half of the respondents felt that the battering followed when they attempted to act independently.

For example, when they would assert their own point of view, when they decided to go back to work, or when they wanted to go to school. As a result of the violence many of the respondents reported feeling inhibited with expressions of love, sensual and emotional aspects of sexuality, and intimacy. They also reported being unable to express emotional support and dependence with their husbands. All of the women had been in the abusive marriage for at least one year and did not necessarily choose leaving as a solution to the problem. Eighty-one percent of the respondents reported that their husbands were exposed to violence in the home as children. Thirteen percent 13% reported yelling between their husbands parents existed and 75% reported yelling and physical abuse existed between their husbands parents. Thus, the theory “social-learning” would seem to be accurate in defining the behavior of these batterers as a “learned behavior.”

CHAPTER SIX

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Social workers play an invaluable part in the area of domestic violence. Social workers usually encounter some aspect of domestic violence regardless of their work setting. Because woman abuse is so widespread, there are few settings in which social workers will not encounter women who are abused. Yet, because of the shame attached to being battered, many women are hesitant to share their secret. Social workers are in key positions to break the silence about the abuse that women experience. Developing regular questions about relationships, conflicts, and the ways in which conflicts are resolved into assessments can give women permission to share their stories Brekke, (1990).

One of the key aspects to developing a treatment plan is for the social worker to become familiar with the theories and characteristics which surrounds the problem. Currently the most effective form of treatment has yet to be determined. Some social workers may choose a psychotherapy approach while others may choose an educational approach. Whichever the case, the social workers must explore his or her own attitudes about violence, anger, sex roles and male and female relationships. The social worker's attitude about these issues will ultimately affect their particular approach to a treatment plan.

A central role for social workers is to link women to the resources they need. Surprisingly a number of women remain unaware of the resources available to them (Davis & Srinivasan, 1992), or if they are aware of resources, they may not know how to gain access to them. Even if women seem uninterested in being linked to resources, the provision of information may eventually be useful. NiCarthy, Fuller, and Stoops (1992) observed many women who repeatedly leave and return to their abusive partners may be gaining strength to enable them to make major life changes later even if there is no immediate change in their behavior.

Social workers can also help develop and lead support groups for women who are abused. Social workers must be skilled in identifying, preventing, and treating the wounds from domestic violence.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this particular study included the following: (1) the sample size should have been larger, (2) a wider geographical area would have been more representative of an entire population, and (3) other variables could have been included to produce a better rounded study.

Direction for Further Research

While it appears there is a meaningful relationship between marital satisfaction and domestic violence, there are still additional items needing to be researched: (1) What is it about domestic violence that drives a person to batter another; (2) Does age, gender, education, socio-economic status and the number of times a person batters affect marital

satisfaction, and (3) How is marital satisfaction impacted if the couples are from different cultures?

In conclusion, further research can uncover many areas surrounding domestic violence and marital satisfaction to help us in understanding the full extent of its consequences.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
WRITTEN CONSENT FORM

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND MARITAL SATISFACTION

To participants in this study:

I am a graduate student at the Clark Atlanta University School of Social Work, Atlanta Georgia. The subject of my master's thesis is: "A descriptive study of the relationship between domestic violence and marital satisfaction." I am submitting questionnaires to female victims of domestic violence in order to determine the effect that domestic violence had on their level of marital satisfaction. You are one of approximately forty participants.

As part of this study, you are being asked to fill out the questionnaire and return it to me or to my assistant. I truly appreciate your cooperation. My goal is to statistically analyze the information that you provide in order to better understand your experience and that of other women that have suffered domestic violence in their relationships with significant others.

The information that you provide will be kept confidential. In all written material and oral presentations in which I might use material from the questionnaire that you have filled out, I will not use your name, or any other identifying information. If I were to want to use any materials in any way not consistent with what is stated above, I would ask for your additional written consent.

In signing this form, you are also assuring me that you will make no financial claims for the use of the material that you submit on the questionnaire. Your cooperation is sincerely appreciated.

I, _____ have read the above statement and agree to participate in this study.

Date _____

I will participate in the study, but I prefer to remain anonymous _____ (Check if applicable).

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions: The following questions are broken down into categories, demographic information, domestic violence and marital satisfaction. Circle the lettered item which corresponds closest to your answer. Only one item should be circled for each question. Where appropriate, there are blanks for answers which may not be reflected in the provided choices; then and only then should the respondent provide an answer other than those provided. Please answer all questions. There are no right or wrong answers.

SECTION I

1. How long have you been married?
 - A. 0-10 years
 - B. 11-20 years
 - C. 21-30 years
 - D. Over 31 years

2. What is your age?
 - A. 20-30 years old
 - B. 31-40 years old
 - C. 41-50 years old
 - D. Less than 20
 - E. Over 51

3. What is the highest grade you completed in school?
 - A. High School
 - B. Associates Degree
 - C. Bachelors Degree
 - D. Masters Degree
 - E. Ph.D.
 - F. Other: _____

4.
 - A. Male
 - B. Female

SECTION II

Directions: This section refers to domestic violence.

1. When did your significant other first verbally abuse you?
 - A. Dating
 - B. Engagement
 - C. Married
2. When did your significant other first hit you?
 - A. Dating
 - B. Engagement
 - C. Married violence
3. How often in the last few months did you engage in violence?
 - A. Daily
 - B. Weekly
 - C. Monthly
 - D. Less than monthly
 - E. Never
4. During the past 6 months, how often did you go to a shelter for battered women?
 - A. Daily
 - B. Weekly
 - C. Monthly
 - D. Less than monthly
 - E. Never
5. How often does the fear of violence influence your daily life?
 - A. Daily
 - B. Weekly
 - C. Monthly
 - D. Less than monthly
 - E. Never
6. In general would you say your religious beliefs influence your daily life?
 - A. Very much
 - B. Quite a bit
 - C. Some
 - D. Little
 - E. Not at all

SECTION III: This section pertains to marital satisfaction. Please circle the letter which best indicates the level of satisfaction you receive in each area. Answer all the questions without leaving any items blank. If you are not sure, please circle the answer, which most closely relates to your feelings.

1. Amount of understanding you receive from your spouse
 - A. Very happy
 - B. Pretty happy
 - C. Not too happy
2. Amount of love and affection you receive from your spouse
 - A. Very happy
 - B. Pretty happy
 - C. Not too happy
3. The extent to which you and your spouse agree about things
 - A. Very happy
 - B. Pretty happy
 - C. Not too happy
4. With your sexual relationship
 - A. Very happy
 - B. Pretty happy
 - C. Not too happy
5. With your spouse as someone who takes care of things around the house
 - A. Very happy
 - B. Pretty happy
 - C. Not too happy
6. With your spouse as someone to do things with
 - A. Very happy
 - B. Pretty happy
 - C. Not too happy
7. With your spouse's faithfulness
 - A. Very happy
 - B. Pretty happy
 - C. Not too happy

8. How would you evaluate your marriage overall
- A. Very happy
 - B. Pretty happy
 - C. Not too happy

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